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Stars for the Crown.



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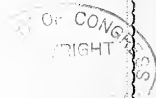
# STARS for the CROWN.

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## A Christmas Lesson.

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FALL RIVER: 4.  
B. EARL & SON,  
1872.



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## Prelude.

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**L**ONG had the Prophets ceased to warn,  
And Faith, in doubt was shrouded ;  
To those who waited for the morn,  
The heavens were darkly clouded.  
The valley held the Lily's bloom,  
Waiting, wan, and wearied,  
Lebanon's cedars stood in gloom,  
While the Redeemer tarried.  
The glory of Zion seemed afar,  
The night held not its gem,  
And, while it waited the morning star,  
Knew not its Bethlehem.

The mantle of night lay on the plain,  
The stars above shone clear,  
In sparkling welcome of the strain,  
Ere they of earth, could hear.  
For lo! the lost song of their morning joy,  
Again in the heavens is ringing ;  
Well may the vaulted heavens employ  
The whole of their hosts in singing  
The glad anthem of joy again,  
“Peace on earth, good will toward men.”

Shout the glad message, ye sons of God,  
Sing ye stars with them ;  
Mercy now stays the chastening rod,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.  
“Glory to God,” sang the angel choirs ;  
“Glory to God,” sang the answering stars ;  
“Glory to God,” flashed the beacon fires  
To heaven’s remotest bars.  
Rang the grand choral of joy again,  
“Peace on earth, good will toward men.”

It seemed sadly in vain ;  
For the innocent slain,  
Mothers in sorrow are weeping.  
    Sharon's opening bud  
    To be crushed in blood,—  
With sin, was in sorrowful keeping.  
So, fitly for aye, at Christmas time,  
May we gladden the heart of the child,  
For the first martyrs now, near the throne sublime,  
From the hand of a Herod, red with crime,  
    Came up from that massacre wild.  
And he who escaped till the day of his death,  
Spake with his own, dear, life-giving breath,  
    The sweetest words he has given,  
“ Suffer the children to come unto me,  
    They must not be forbidden ;  
So, the hearts of all who come must be,  
    Of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

But his own face yet.  
With his own blood wet,  
Must be laid in bitterest anguish down ;

There is buffet and insult, scourging and scorn,  
The mock robe of royalty, crown of thorn,  
Ere he wears by right the Redeemer's crown.

He groans in agony, wild and aloud,  
The thorn-torn head in death is bowed.  
The dumb earth answers its maker's moan,  
A low dirge, the stars of the morning moan,  
And shed in shame their pitying tears,  
While God's mercy mantles this crime of the years.  
And they bore him away to the waiting tomb ;  
The Rose and the Lily came not to bloom.

But the work of the Master is not complete ;  
They must hear the tread of those buried feet ;  
They must see the light of those closed eyes ;  
From the gloom of that death he must arise.  
They must hear again the matchless voice,  
Ere in Christ, as " God with us," they fully rejoice.  
From Edom, and Bozrah, in garments red,

They hear from the door of the opening grave,  
The sound of His footstep's welcome tread,  
Who speaks now in righteousness, mighty to  
save.



“ Reach hither thy hand, to this pierced palm,  
Thrust it into the wound of the Roman spear,  
That the surge of your sad doubts I may calm,  
And take from your hearts your blinding fear.  
And lo ! I am with you unto the end ;  
Go with the glad tidings afar,  
For healing and life the word shall attend,  
And ye shall know well, what meaneth, ‘The friend  
That is closer than brothers are.’ ”

The angels are waiting, with honor to greet,  
Yet hushed is their triumphant psalm  
While gratitude covers with tears the feet,  
Wounded in bringing to earth a balm.  
Wide are now swinging the portal doors,  
And the golden gates are lifted high ;  
There are palms and crowns on the golden floors,  
For the victor Prince is nigh.  
Lift higher your heads ye glorious gates,  
Before you, to enter, the Conqueror waits ;  
Higher and higher till He enters in,  
From the fearful contest with death and sin.

Centurial ages have passed away,  
Since they steadfastly gazed into Heaven that day,  
But the Master hath promised, and still he guides :  
And here on this gladsome Christmas eve,  
Into every heart that will believe,  
He silently enters, and there abides.

# The Lesson.



## The Lesson.

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**S**TILL soundeth that mystic minstrelsy,  
—“ Forever, to-day and yesterday,”—  
And Conscience, the wakeful shepherd, keeps  
Unwearied vigil while Reason sleeps.  
And ever in times of the spirit's calm,  
With the power and spell of a soothing charm,  
If the soul will listen, it still is there,  
The soundless song, on the midnight air.  
And though those angels grand and olden,  
Who flashed from portals gemmed and golden,  
Have never repeated to mortal ear,  
The song of that night, so sweet and clear ;  
Though never again to mortal eyes,  
Have given one gleam of their angel guise ;

Still, on the air o'er the slumbrous soul,  
Broken strains of that symphony, silently roll.  
Who hears their song on this sorrowing earth,  
May know that it heralds a Savior's birth.  
Well may this heraldry banish fears,  
For the cradle of Christ, is the heart that hears.

To one listening life, this music came  
    With all its meaning manifold,  
Imparting the glow of a heavenly flame,  
    And more of joy than heart could hold,  
The golden bowl brimming to overflow.  
Surely, sorrow need only know  
There was light for night,  
And life for death,  
And a song of joy,  
For sorrow's breath ;  
A soul redeemed, its sins forgiven,  
A glimpse of the many mansioned heaven ;  
To gladly receive the tidings given.

It seemed to his early love, that all  
Must yield their hearts to the gentle call.  
“They perish now, Master, in pain and woe ;”  
And his prayer was pleading “Oh! bid me go.”

The Lord Christ heard ; as the rapt youth prayed,  
A sweet smile over His features played ;  
On the low bowed head of His weeping child,  
His pierced hand tenderly left a blessing ;  
While the answering voice so clear and mild,  
Thrilled, with joy that was almost wild,  
The heart that was dumb with delight, while pressing  
His head now raised to that blessed rest,  
Which is known when pillowed upon His breast.  
And he heard the warning :

“ Would you know  
That the world has sin as well as woe ;  
That many will scorn both the message and thee ;  
That the rage of their madness died not with me ;  
That still there is possible Calvary ?”

“Thou shalt go, my son, but with me awhile,  
You must learn the spell of the tempter’s wife,  
Which is over the world and even thee:—  
I will teach you how they welcome me.”  
And clasped in the strength of encircling arms,  
    He felt on his brow the Savior’s kiss,  
That sealed him safe from the tempter’s charms,  
    With a foretaste faint of heaven’s bliss.

They went where the great world’s thoughtless  
    throngs  
Sped on, to the grave, with laughter and songs.  
There the Lord himself called, and called in vain.  
The enthusiast heart was torn with pain,  
As he said, “O Master, why must they die,  
Let us stand in their path, and strive, and cry.”  
But swifter and swifter it sped along ;  
For answer, some strain of a bacchanal song.  
Their effort was futile, they could not detain  
The throngs of that passionai pleasure train.  
Faint and far in the distance their voices were lost,  
And life was the price which this madness cost.



There were rulers and statesmen, hurrying past ;  
Not a look on the patient pleader cast.

From this thoughtless revel the young man turned;  
With deep indignation his spirit burned ;

He had heard them there with foul scoffing  
deride,

And curse with the name of the crucified ;

While scorn with hate exultingly vied,  
Love deeper than his was lightly spurned.

" Why, some would crucify now, I fear,  
For the warning you speak so kindly here."

But he meets, as he listens with strange surprise,  
A keen rebuke in the low replies.

" My child, though scorned, I come each day,  
And call to the throngs that crowd this way.

For anon, when these fair cheeks are paling,

And the joy of this false lure is failing,

Some will call with hopeless wailing.

Whenever they call, I wait to go—

And am only sad, when they scorn me so."

The zeal of impatience in shame is weeping ;  
While the vigil of pity the Christ is keeping.

“ Let us turn to those who have wisely heard,  
And heeded the call of the living word.  
Your spirit would falter and faint, I fear,  
If I were to teach you, only here.  
My children have reared a temple of praise,  
Where they gather to worship on holy days.”

Gay doors are closed, the marts are still,  
The bells of the Sabbath, quietly thrill  
The air, and hearts, and hurrying feet,  
That river of life in the silent street.  
They have gathered from many a home of prayer ;  
The strong and the aged, the young and the fair,  
In reverent silence are waiting there.  
The great organ breathes out its suppliant strain,  
A sound like the pleading of many souls,  
As through the high arches its melody rolls,  
Then sobs its low prayer into silence again.

By prayer the worshipping throng is led,  
The word, with reverent heeding read.  
Then an anthem of praise whose choral swell,  
Voices the worshipping host so well.  
Now, from lips where the Master's touch has stayed,  
From heart that His deathless love has fired,  
From mind which saving truth has swayed,  
From soul, by the strength of faith inspired,  
Came the spoken word with power endued,  
By the blood of the crucified deeply imbued.  
Even while he plead there were answering sighs,  
And tears were falling from soulful eyes.  
They were fired with the joy the Savior sends,  
When the worshipper low in penitence bends.

The heart of the young disciple was filled,  
With an ecstatic longing and fervor thrilled,  
As anew for the work of his life he burned ;  
And, again to Him who had led him there he turned,  
While his heart and features were all aglow,  
For this must gladden the sad one so.

But the touching sadness remained the same,  
Though he greeted with joy love's bursting flame.

"My child, I am glad for these, and thee,  
But through this worshipping throng, I see  
The sad homes of the children of poverty.  
They have barred by these grand and massive doors,  
The steps that would stain these muffled floors,—  
The paths which my earthly footsteps trod  
Lead not to this, though the house of God.  
And while I am glad for this scene to-day,  
Glad when the rich and gifted pray,  
My heart for the poor and the humble bleeds,  
The gulf is wide from this to their needs."

The listener clasped his hands in prayer ;  
    Into his heart as never before,  
    Came the spirit that seeks the humble door.  
"Bid me, to the lowly thy message bear ;  
I will walk till my feet be bare and bleeding,  
If thou wilt grant thy blessed leading !"  
Then over that face a new light stole,  
That flooded with peace that pleading soul ;

He rests, as John, in a moment of bliss,  
And his lips were sealed by a sacred kiss.

“ Thus do I,” He said, slow and solemnly,  
“ Consecrate thee to this blessed ministry ;  
Thy lips thus sealed shall never plead  
In vain, with the children of toil and need ;  
I have given this consecration holy,  
Let the words of thy mouth be pure and lowly ;—  
Even now I will lead you to win the first gem,  
With which I will fill your diadem.”

Past stately abodes of plenty, of pride,  
Where were ringing the sounds of Christmas  
cheer,—

For the morrow would bring that day so dear,—  
Wondering he followed the steps of his guide,  
To a place that wronged the name of home ;  
To the depths for priceless pearls they come.

A worn mother watches a fluttering breath,  
O'er her pale infant struggling with death.  
The breath of the drinker has left its blight,  
And banished the luster of love's quiet light.  
A face, full of longing, so shrunk and pale,  
As no words can tell, told the sorrowful tale ;  
There was no food nor warmth for the dying child  
Whose piteous wail, was driving her wild.  
Unconscious the while in a sottish sleep  
Lay the woman's protector. "To cherish and keep"—  
How vain that sacred nuptial vow,  
Seemed to that wronged woman now.  
The only comfort in this her grief,  
This drunken slumber was real relief.  
In vain the aid so kindly brought,  
The light, the warmth and nursing were naught  
To stay the destroyer. The child was dead,  
In mercy, soon from its misery sped.  
One thought of the day of betrothal to him  
Now unconscious, and all grew dim ;

For pale and still as her dead child there,  
The mother fell back in a swoon of despair.  
But the spell on the stupid sleeper is past,  
From a base debauch, awake at last,  
To behold the wreck his life had wrought,  
To be by this fearful ruin taught.  
For a moment he sat in silence there,—  
He had known her when young and daintily fair,  
And had loved her long and loved her well,  
Till held in the chains of that demon spell,—  
Back to those bright and happy years,  
His conscience scourged ; with remorseful tears  
He plead for one look, one answering word,  
Till the thoughtful strangers turned away,  
Thinking God and conscience, wiser than they.  
Her closed eyes opened, unrebuking and mild  
They lingered a moment on father and child,  
Then closed amid such a pallor of woe,  
As only the patient, heart-broken know.

“My God! I thank Thee,” said the now earnest  
man,

And he spake as only the fervid can,  
“ And here by the side of my dead, I swear  
To follow no more this path of despair.”  
But the “ Man of sorrows,” who has watched the  
                  fears

Of eighteen hundred circling years,  
To enter this life, is waiting here ;

    His locks were white with the cares he bore,  
    The dews of night had sprinkled them o’er ;

    His kind hand knocked at the closed door  
Of the strong man’s heart—unknown, and so near.  
With earnest pleading, and tender tone,  
While sorrow is reaping what sin has sown,  
He says to the heart with agony full,  
“ Though as scarlet now, it shall be as wool.

Long, so long ere this sorrowful day  
I sought, and in scorn you turned away ;  
But now, my sadly erring son,  
Despite the wrong you have madly done,  
I love, and would save you from your sin ;  
Let me into your heart, Oh ! let me in.”



One long, fierce struggle with self and pride,—  
The spell is broken—the will is bowed,  
And the tender arms of the crucified,  
Clasp that strong penitent weeping aloud.

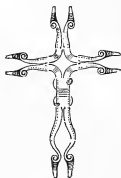
The mother's eyes brimmed with a holy joy,  
Her torn heart throbbed with a blissful pain,  
As she lifted her thought in thanks again,  
For that angel of mercy—her dear, dead boy.

The hours had sped, and midnight morn,  
From the hours of Christmas eve had come ;  
And lo ! again was Jesus born,  
In one more heart in a humble home.

From the blessed glow of that heavenly light,  
The disciple went forth to a storm-torn night ;  
Swiftly aslant through the silent street,  
The cold wind blew the stinging sleet ;

But he heeded it not, for there by his side,  
Was the silent step of the crucified.  
And the calm delight in the Master's eyes,  
Filled his soul with glad surprise.

"Thy sorrow, thy joy, thou knowest now,  
With this first star I crown thy brow."





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